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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Health Officials Share Importance of Cervical Cancer Screening and Vaccine**  
*100 new cases of cervical cancer are expected this year, early diagnosis is key*

**CHARLESTON, W.Va.** – Health officials with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) and Charleston Area Medical Center (CAMC) Women and Children's Hospital today reminded residents about the seriousness of cervical cancer during an awareness event hosted by CAMC as part of National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month.

"Cervical cancer is highly preventable because of screening tests and vaccine," said DHHR Cabinet Secretary Karen L. Bowling. "Today, we joined our partners from both the private and public sector to highlight this serious disease and the interventions available to help protect the health and well-being of the women of West Virginia."

"It's important to remember that half of all cervical cancers occur in women rarely or never screened for cancer, and another 10%–20% of cancers develop among women who were screened, but did not receive adequate follow-up care," said Dr. Rahul Gupta, State Health Officer and Commissioner for the Bureau for Public Health.

There were 107 women diagnosed with cervical cancer in West Virginia last year and data indicate that approximately 100 more women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer this year.

"Cervical cancer is preventable with Pap screening tests and vaccine to combat human papillomavirus (HPV), which is the main cause of cervical cancer," said Stephen H. Bush, MD, FACOG, Associate Professor and Chairperson of the West Virginia University Charleston Division Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. "Cervical cancer deaths decreased 70% between 1955 and 1992, and continue to decline each year due to increasing use of the Pap test. The HPV vaccine is nearly 100% effective in preventing the most common types of HPV-related cervical cancer."

The Pap test can detect changes in the cervix before cancer develops and it can detect cancer in its earliest stages when more treatment options are available. For males and females under the age of 26, HPV vaccination is available and helps to prevent cervical cancer in women.

The West Virginia Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (WVBCCSP) provides free or low-cost Pap tests for low-income, uninsured or underinsured women.

"More than 300 providers statewide offer this service to program-eligible women," said Gupta. "An uninsured woman with a family of four can have a total household income of \$59,628 and still be eligible for the program."

To learn more about cervical cancer and the WVBCCSP, visit [www.wvdhhr.org/bccsp/](http://www.wvdhhr.org/bccsp/), stop by your local health department or call 1-800-642-8522.

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